United Nations E/2017/SR.34

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
13 November 2017

Original: English

2017 session
28 July 2016-27 July 2017
Humanitarian affairs segment

Summary record of the 34th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 21 June 2017, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Schulz (Vice-President) ..... (Germany)

Contents

Opening of the segment

Agenda item 9: Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

This record is subject to corrections. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Council at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.

GE.17-17222 (E) 061117 131117

1717222

Please recycle

In the absence of Mr. Shava (Zimbabwe), Mr. Schulz (Germany), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Opening of the segment

1. **The President**, opening the humanitarian affairs segment on the theme "Restoring humanity and leaving no one behind: working together to reduce people's humanitarian need, risk and vulnerability", said that it offered a unique opportunity to discuss operational issues relating to the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to identify possible solutions.

2. Demand for assistance remained disturbingly high while the challenges involved had become increasingly complex. Of particular concern were the people experiencing or at risk of famine in South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and north-eastern Nigeria, and the alarming levels of food insecurity elsewhere in the world. Although a robust humanitarian response had led to incremental improvements in some areas, more than 20 million people remained in urgent need of assistance. Without coordinated global efforts and respect for international humanitarian law, development gains would be reversed, leading to further instability and condemning many more people to starvation or displacement. Indeed, a record number of people — over 65 million — had been displaced by conflict, persecution and natural disasters, including those linked to climate change.

3. Disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights law was also a serious concern: attacks frequently targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure and impeded life-saving assistance. A prevailing lack of accountability had created a climate of impunity, exacerbating need. It was crucial to explore those problems and identify best practices and opportunities for action.

Agenda item 9: Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance
(A/72/76-E/2017/58)

4. **Mr. O'Brien** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), introducing the Secretary-General's report on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/72/76-E/2017/58), said that more than 141 million people in 37 countries currently required humanitarian assistance and protection. Despite an overall increase in funding in both relative and absolute terms, the gap between needs and resources was growing rapidly. The vast majority of those needs related to complex emergencies, mostly involving armed conflict. For example, in 2016, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners had responded to a record number of "level-3" emergencies. The increasingly brutal and violent nature of armed conflict, as well as the urbanization of warfare, had resulted in thousands of deaths and forced tens of millions of people to flee their homes. Most of the latter remained displaced within their own countries for 10 to 20 years. Efforts were being made to address their short- and long-term needs, which were often overlooked, as well as those of their host communities. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the ongoing United Nations Global Compact negotiations represented an important step towards finding durable solutions; however, further action to mobilize resources was essential.

5. In 2016, natural disasters had adversely affected some 377 million people and caused over US$ 92 billion in damage. Climate change was an increasingly powerful driver of humanitarian suffering, leading to severe drought, flooding and storms. In addition to humanitarian assistance and protection, such complex challenges required the adoption of a broader agenda for change, including a new way of working with development partners, a preventive approach to crises and measures to link short- and long-term efforts.

6. While many factors, including structural fragility and climate change, contributed to escalating needs a large number of crises were the result of conflict, insecurity and a lack of protection. The absence of political solutions was driving needs and increasing the cost of humanitarian action.

7. International humanitarian law and the rules of armed conflict were disregarded with outright impunity. It was critically important to protect civilians, who were often

deliberately targeted or indiscriminately killed or injured. Attacks often also targeted civilian installations, including schools and hospitals. Not only was it vital to take further action to ensure respect for international law and humanitarian principles, humanitarian actors also needed to adapt to the changing global context, in order to make a tangible difference to people's lives.

8. Progress had been made in certain areas, through collaboration with diverse partners and the adoption of measures to enhance national and local response capacities. More funding was being channelled to local actors, including women-led organizations, and progress had been made in securing funds to ensure that marginalized and vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, were involved in humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery programmes. The issues discussed at the World Humanitarian Summit held in 2016 were also closely linked to the theme of the present humanitarian affairs segment, in line with the New Way of Working and the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, whose Goals could be achieved only if the needs of the 141 million people caught up in humanitarian crises were met and if those people were given the opportunity to reap the benefits of sustainable development.

9. Three high-level panels would be held during the course of the humanitarian segment of the Council's session to address many of the aforementioned issues: the first panel would review best practice to reach people in need and promote respect for international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles; the second would examine protracted crises and ways to meet needs and to reduce needs, risk and vulnerabilities; and the third would explore the risks related to natural disasters and climate change and approaches for mitigating, preparing for and responding to those risks.

10. **The representative of Ecuador**, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it was important to bear in mind that the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly had different mandates and functions, and care should be taken to avoid the duplication of work. Thus, the humanitarian affairs segment should focus on the operational aspects of humanitarian assistance and humanitarian emergencies.

11. The members of the Group would welcome regular updates relating to the coordination of humanitarian assistance and the implementation of relevant norms. It was important to focus on the issues of conflict and security, as well as on emergencies and natural disasters. Indeed, recommendations were required on all of those issues, in order to build capacity and foster resilience. For example, famine was becoming an increasingly serious problem in several countries, and substantive operational recommendations were required to support efforts to tackle that problem. Likewise, further updates on the rolling out of the new urban agenda in the context of humanitarian assistance would be useful, as would specific recommendations in that connection.

12. There was also a pressing need to enhance national leadership. It would be helpful to receive regular updates on the coordination of humanitarian assistance and any gaps identified in that regard. Given the lack of diversity in geographical representation and gender balance among United Nations humanitarian staff, in particular in the professional and higher grades, it was imperative to obtain information on measures taken to enhance diversity and to collect quality data, with identifiable sources and clear sampling methods, including for specific countries.

13. He welcomed the attention given to the observations made by the Group relating to the Secretary-General's report and assurances that the Group's recommendations would be taken into consideration in the future. Humanitarian action must be guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. He was concerned at the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures; condemned the threats to and deliberate targeting of humanitarian personnel, including through acts of terrorism; and called on all parties to comply with international humanitarian law in order to protect and assist civilians, including in occupied territories. Furthermore, in the light of the growing gap in funding, he urged donor countries to increase the level of assistance provided.

14. **The representative of Malta**, speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and

Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that a paradigm shift was needed: peacebuilding must no longer be seen as merely a post-conflict activity. Given the recurrent nature of violent conflict, sustaining peace was often a means of conflict prevention.

15. It was essential, in order to ensure the coherence of United Nations activities, to link the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture to the Secretary-General's review of peace operations, the high-level review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

16. Peacebuilding sought to address the gap between security and development in fragile post-conflict States. To be truly effective, the United Nations system needed to work in a more flexible, coordinated fashion — both at country and at headquarters level — and focus more on prevention and early warning tools. As it was an inherently political process, peacebuilding required a long-term, holistic approach that addressed the structural causes of conflict and risks of recurrence; provided for inclusive and participatory political processes; sought to build strong and effective institutions capable of addressing the root causes of conflict; and responded to people's needs. It was important to promote inclusive national ownership and a "bottom-up" approach, paying specific attention to vulnerable or excluded groups. In order to increase the chances of building a sustainable peace, it was particularly important to focus on the role of women and to include a human rights dimension in peacebuilding efforts, both as an overall objective and as an early warning tool.

17. The analytical capacities of the Peacebuilding Commission should be strengthened and cooperation ensured with the authorities of the host State to promote national ownership of peacebuilding efforts and support the transfer of responsibilities from United Nations actors to national authorities. In order to take advantage of the Commission's political added value, namely its power to bring together Member States, regional and subregional organizations, efforts should be made to adopt lighter modes of engagement and a more flexible and politically attuned approach.

18. In order to secure more predictable funding, it was important to address the silo approach of the donor community. The Peacebuilding Fund must be complemented by longer-term commitments from other bilateral or multilateral sources. In that context, he wished to draw attention to the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace and to stress the need to explore other funding opportunities.

19. The European Union was keen to further strengthen its partnership with the United Nations, including in the fields of conflict prevention and crisis management. Close strategic and operational partnerships at inter-organizational and inter-institutional level were also required to sustain peace.

20. **The representative of Ecuador**, speaking also on behalf of Argentina, Austria, Bulgaria, Chile, Lebanon, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, Sierra Leone, Spain and Uruguay, welcomed the Secretary-General's report on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. In that connection, the Safe Schools Declaration represented an intergovernmental political commitment to protecting education in armed conflict, including a pledge to use the related guidelines to protect educational institutions from military use. Attacks on schools and other activities that sought to undermine the education system placed children in danger, and also impeded a country's recovery from conflict and threatened sustainable development. To date, 66 States had endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, which provided a framework for action and cooperation, including commitments to improve reporting, collect reliable data, provide assistance to victims, investigate violations and prosecute perpetrators, develop conflict-sensitive approaches to education and support United Nations work relating to children and armed conflict. He urged all States that had not already endorsed the Declaration to do so without delay.

21. **The representative of Turkey**, speaking also on behalf of Australia, Indonesia, Mexico and the Republic of Korea, said that humanitarian crises had negative impacts on societies around the world, claimed countless lives and prevented humanity from achieving peace and sustainable development. The international community needed to take swift

action to address those challenges, with partnerships between States and stakeholders playing a vital role in preventing and responding to humanitarian emergencies. The humanitarian affairs segment afforded an important opportunity to advance various issues on the humanitarian agenda in the light of the global policy priorities that had been shaped by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Humanitarian Summit and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. Australia, Indonesia, Mexico, the Republic of Korea and Turkey particularly welcomed the approach that consisted in anticipating crises and investing in risk: at the World Humanitarian Summit, those countries had committed to efforts to support the accelerated implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030; and at the fifth Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction they had promoted public-private engagement in building community resilience.

22. The five countries supported the full empowerment of women and girls and had committed to working closely with local and national stakeholders to build women's capacity in humanitarian settings. They also recognized the need to make humanitarian response inclusive of persons with disabilities, and to ensure non-discrimination.

23. The theme of the humanitarian affairs segment highlighted the importance of strengthening collaboration and coordination between a range of humanitarian and development actors from the onset of emergencies, working over multiple-year time frames. The global agenda would be successful only if stakeholders committed to common objectives with a strong sense of shared responsibility and ownership.

24. **The representative of Australia** said that the segment took place against a backdrop of escalating humanitarian needs and challenges. Over 140 million people required humanitarian assistance, global displacement was at an all-time high, State and non-State actors had attacked civilians and humanitarian workers, and famine and drought had shown how climate change could exacerbate crises.

25. Nevertheless, positive signs had emerged, including the international community's rapid response to the drought in Somalia and the investment in disaster preparedness in Asia and the Pacific, resulting in a robust response to natural disasters by several countries in the region. The Government of Australia was committed to humanitarian reforms to improve outcomes for communities and save lives; it had significantly increased humanitarian funding, over 30 per cent of which was unearmarked, allowing agencies to respond quickly to early warnings of crises. The Government had entered into multi-year partnerships with several organizations in an effort to improve predictability, and was taking a more strategic approach to protracted crises such as those in Syria and Iraq. Support for disaster preparedness and response efforts in Asia and the Pacific had been stepped up through partnerships and capacity-building initiatives with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and disaster management offices. The Government believed that humanitarian action should be as local as possible and that international responses should be demand- rather than supply-driven, taking the form of support for efforts led by national and local authorities.

26. Women and girls should be central in decision-making before, during and after crises and their specific needs should be identified and met. Preventing and responding to gender-based violence was a major priority and the Government was working to mainstream the consideration of sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian interventions. Moreover, recognizing that sexual and reproductive health issues were the leading cause of death and disability among women and girls in crisis-affected and fragile settings, the Government had made a major contribution to the programme "Sexual and Reproductive Health in Crisis and Post-Crisis Situations" of the International Planned Parenthood Federation; it also provided support for the health and protection services delivered by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to displaced women in Afghanistan, Iraq and Myanmar.

27. Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations ought to be able to participate in humanitarian response planning, implementation and recovery efforts. His Government wished to express disappointment that the Economic and Social Council had not endorsed the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action

and reiterated its support for the essential needs, protection, safety and respect of persons with disabilities.

28. Humanitarian assistance could not resolve conflicts; only political solutions and respect for international humanitarian law could deliver lasting peace and security. He hoped that 2017 would be the year in which the international community began to deliver on its humanitarian reform commitments.

29. **The observer for Finland** said that the global humanitarian situation had not improved since the World Humanitarian Summit and too many people continued to suffer from conflicts and emergencies, while too little was being done to address the causes and tackle the consequences. There was a need for greater investment in resilience-building and disaster risk reduction. At a time when humanitarian needs were growing faster than resources, the Government of Finland supported the reform agenda of the Secretary-General and the New Way of Working and it encouraged the private sector to join efforts to meet needs, build resilience and increase the effectiveness of humanitarian action. The international community should be ready to employ new methods, such as moving from in-kind to cash-based assistance, with better linkages to long-term development and social protection schemes and more accountability. Finland supported unearmarked, multi-year, flexible funding and called upon the international community to abide by its commitments and implement the principles of the Grand Bargain.

30. In the spirit of leaving no one behind and of reaching those furthest behind, the Government invited all Member States to endorse and observe the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. Humanitarian action should also focus on the needs of women and girls through the use of age- and sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis and through equal participation in decision-making. The international community should respond to violations by demanding and defending unconditional, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all populations in need, relentlessly promoting humanitarian principles and reasserting the primacy of international human rights law.

31. **The observer for Poland** said that in recent years, Poland had increased its humanitarian assistance budget and since 2016 had funded education, shelter and health services in the Middle East and Ukraine. The Government supported new instruments and solutions to ensure that assistance was delivered effectively, including through voluntary contributions to trust funds and through cash-based assistance and voucher-based projects, which increased the self-reliance and dignity of beneficiaries. Other innovations included small-scale humanitarian projects by diplomatic missions that had previously undertaken only development activities and the introduction of multi-annual funding. Since the World Humanitarian Summit, the Government had begun to channel humanitarian funding to the poorest local communities in order to alleviate the burden shouldered by the governments and peoples of host countries. However, it was essential for the international community to address the root causes of global humanitarian crises, advocating respect for humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law. His Government was aware of the shared responsibility for the current global situation and would actively support efforts to increase peace and stability, to restore humanity and to leave no one behind.

32. **The representative of Japan** said that large movements of people placed a heavy burden on the economies, societies and development of host countries. To address humanitarian challenges, the United Nations system should strive to work more efficiently and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law, including through the implementation of Security Council resolution 2286 (2016) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

33. The Government of Japan considered that both humanitarian and development concerns should be addressed from an early stage of planning and had carried out several projects that reflected that approach. In cooperation with United Nations entities, it had participated in projects relating to the registration and medical assistance of Syrian refugees and vocational training schemes. The Japan International Cooperation Agency had provided loans and grants to the Government of Jordan to facilitate infrastructure improvements and provide services for refugees. Considering that the disaster risk reduction, prior investment and "build back better" pillars of the Sendai Framework were vital in building societies'

resilience, Japan promoted the global targets of the Framework bilaterally and in cooperation with international organizations and the private sector. The Government applied a "whole of society" approach to disaster risk reduction and had taken the lead in raising awareness of World Tsunami Awareness Day at the General Assembly.

34. In 2016, humanitarian issues had featured prominently on the agenda of the international community. Governments should now make good on their commitments so that assistance could reach as many people as possible.

35. **The observer for the Philippines** said that his Government was working to bring the legal framework of the Philippines into line with the Sendai Framework and other post-2015 development processes. The success of humanitarian actions ultimately depended on the collective strength of stakeholders. Therefore, the Government aimed to strengthen partnerships, although it considered that national governments should retain the primary duty and central role in humanitarian operations.

36. While international efforts should aim to break the vicious cycle of dependence on funding by addressing the root causes of crises, the response to some crises was clearly underfunded; accordingly, it had made small contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Moreover, regional organizations were playing an increasingly vital role and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, with the Philippines as chair, had signed the "One ASEAN One Response" declaration to further strengthen humanitarian response and disaster risk reduction in the region.

37. Finally, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to the principles contained in the annex of General Assembly resolution 46/182 and to its obligations under international law. It called on all governments to fulfil their collective duty of building a safer and more resilient international community that left no one behind.

38. **The representative of Argentina** said that Argentina remained committed to international humanitarian assistance — whose delivery was primarily the responsibility of States — and to the laws that protected humanity, especially persons in conflict situations. The Government recognized its responsibility to ensure that no one was left behind, by reducing vulnerabilities, adapting to climate change and promoting sustainable development so as to prevent the displacement of communities and individuals. By strengthening local communities and building resilience, individuals could actively prepare for crises and contribute to recovery and rehabilitation and not be dependent on international assistance. The White Helmets Commission of Argentina made efforts to manage disaster risk, increase resilience and ensure the provision of international humanitarian assistance in critical situations of hunger and poverty in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework.

39. **The observer for Turkey** said that humanitarian emergencies presented increasingly complex challenges. It was a stark fact that over 65 million people around the world had been displaced. Turkey was currently providing shelter to close to 3.3 million Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan nationals who had fled violence. For some time, the existing humanitarian system had been unable to respond to the needs of the 130 million people affected by emergencies. For that reason, it was necessary to strengthen humanitarian action and adopt new ways of working together to ensure that no one was left behind.

40. The commitments made by the international community through the Sendai Framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Humanitarian Summit and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants provided major opportunities for reinforcing existing response capacities and building new and effective partnerships. The ongoing famine and food security crises in sub-Saharan Africa were extremely worrying and required urgent attention. Through its development-oriented humanitarian policy, Turkey was doing its utmost to provide food and water assistance to the affected countries, including Somalia and Yemen. In early June 2017, Turkey had led a field visit to the region to raise awareness of the situation among members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and to promote durable solutions. In order to break the vicious cycle of famine, it would be necessary to promote conflict prevention and support efforts to shore up resilience and reduce needs over time.

41. The humanitarian tragedy in the Syrian Arab Republic had entered its seventh year. In line with international law, Turkey had maintained an open-door policy towards Syrian nationals who had sought shelter in Turkey and had implemented a comprehensive approach to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of over 3 million Syrians. In that regard, free health care had been provided, emergency evacuations had been carried out, over 60 per cent of school-age Syrian nationals had been enrolled in school and work permits had been issued to around 20,000 Syrian nationals. Since the summer of 2014, Turkey had taken steps to provide shelter to Iraqi nationals affected by terrorism and to support the assistance efforts of the United Nations and local authorities in Iraq. Turkey was also helping the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to provide support to millions of Palestinian refugees and called for additional financial support for the Agency.

42. The humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council offered States a valuable opportunity to discuss emerging and pressing humanitarian issues. For the first time in the history of the United Nations, the World Humanitarian Summit had brought together all stakeholders to discuss solutions to shared challenges. Given the strong impetus for change it had generated, the Summit should not be a one-off event but an ongoing process with a defined follow-up mechanism. To that end, Turkey had submitted its first national report on progress for commitment and urged all stakeholders to use the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation to do the same. In May 2017, Turkey had hosted the "Advancing the New Way of Working" workshop in Istanbul to mark the anniversary of the World Humanitarian Summit. Turkey supported the New Way Of Working initiative and was pleased that the Secretary-General had placed it high on his management reform agenda. It called on humanitarian and development actors to operationalize the platform in order to better deliver help to those in need. It would continue to support the outcomes of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and would contribute to the development of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the global compact on refugees.

43. **The representative of Germany** said that humanitarian assistance should be continuously enhanced. At the same time, more had to be done to reduce existing needs, to bring humanitarian crises quickly to a close and to prevent humanitarian needs from arising in the first place. To that end, partners from outside the humanitarian system needed to play an active role and development actors must raise their tolerance of risk in order to work with local authorities and link up with humanitarian efforts. Much progress had been achieved in that regard and efforts to increase cooperation between humanitarian, development and other actors had started to bear fruit. In order for humanitarian assistance to effectively address needs, it was necessary to create an environment that reflected the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

44. Germany remained concerned at the ongoing risk of famine in north-eastern Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen, Ethiopia and Kenya and at the situation of famine already declared in South Sudan. Following the Secretary-General's call for action earlier in the year, Germany had initiated and co-hosted a series of high-level events to raise awareness of the urgency of the situation and advocate for more humanitarian funding. In 2017, Germany's support for humanitarian assistance in those countries had increased to €460 million. Greater humanitarian access, funding and sustainable, effective engagement on the ground were required to adequately address humanitarian needs. With over 65 million refugees worldwide, more equitable and international responsibility-sharing and a more comprehensive approach to addressing large-scale refugee situations were urgently needed. In that regard, Germany considered the establishment of the comprehensive refugee response framework to be a significant development. Germany was providing support to the framework approach in pilot countries and to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Economic and Social Council was an important forum for coordination in the lead-up to the establishment of the comprehensive refugee response framework.

45. While the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants would undoubtedly lead to improvements in the support provided to refugees and migrants, other groups must not be overlooked. Increased attention should be paid to the plight of internally displaced persons, including those displaced by natural disasters. In that regard, the twentieth

anniversary of the establishment of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement might provide an opportunity to focus on internally displaced persons' rights and needs. In the face of the increasingly frequent natural disasters caused by climate change, Germany had been developing an innovative, forecast-based financing approach that enabled early action to be taken in response to forecasts of extreme weather.

46. Donors and humanitarian organizations were responsible for implementing the commitments made through the World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing. In that connection, Germany had proposed concrete measures involving the harmonization and simplification of reporting requirements.

47. Germany strongly supported the coordination and leadership role played by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights within the humanitarian system and called on the Office to reform itself so that it could continue to play that role in challenging times. Key components of the United Nations coordination toolbox must be strengthened, including the Central Emergency Response Fund and the country-based pooled fund. Germany had increased its contribution to the former fund to €60 million in 2017.

48. **The representative of India** said that the theme "restoring humanity and leaving no one behind", chosen for the 2017 humanitarian affairs segment of the Council, would help to mainstream humanitarian action and bridge the divide between development and humanitarian activities. India called for special provisions to be made for supporting the most vulnerable members of society, particularly women and children. India was deeply concerned at the number, intensity and length of conflicts in the world and the unprecedented number of people displaced by them. Continued instability, food and water insecurity and intense and frequent natural disasters had further added to the scale of human suffering.

49. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the World Humanitarian Summit and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants were some of the global initiatives through which all relevant States and stakeholders sought to address humanitarian challenges in a comprehensive manner. Although more funds were available for humanitarian action than ever before, those funds were still insufficient to meet the existing needs.

50. The failure of the peace and security pillar of the United Nations was one of the key causes of the current crises. Unless that shortcoming was remedied, the humanitarian situation was unlikely to improve in the near future. Reports from people on the ground indicated that the principles set out in General Assembly resolution 46/182 were insufficiently considered during humanitarian activities. Despite firm commitments and pledges for reform, the parties concerned continued to operate in accordance with narrow political interests, addressing their own constituencies and neglecting needs on the ground. In order for that situation to be remedied, global humanitarian systems would have to be comprehensively reformed. The future of humanitarian action required a people-centred approach in which programmes were drawn up in consultation with all stakeholders. Although some of the recommendations set out in the Secretary-General's report on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations were ambitious and useful, others were vague and would have to be examined further in the light of international legal obligations.

51. **The representative of Ireland** said that nearly two years after the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, and one year after the World Humanitarian Summit, meaningful progress had not been made towards reducing global humanitarian needs. In order to ensure that no one was left behind, it would be necessary to focus on the needs and not the status of those in crisis, and to effectively and coherently address their vulnerabilities. Beneficiaries of assistance had complex needs and lived in rapidly changing situations. It was increasingly difficult to establish a clear boundary between humanitarian and development needs. Actors in both areas needed to work together more coherently to ensure that all sections of society were included in national development planning. The comprehensive refugee response framework would help to ensure that humanitarian and development efforts were linked together from the onset of a crisis. Steps must be taken to

strengthen approaches that invested in the resilience of refugees and local communities, reducing their overall vulnerability.

52. Some 80 per cent of humanitarian crises were related to conflicts. To a large extent, the humanitarian needs stemming from those conflicts were exacerbated by the manner in which they were conducted and by the fact that the parties to them violated international law, including the Protocols I and II additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Humanitarian needs were heightened by targeted attacks on civilian infrastructure, the refusal to grant humanitarian access to besieged areas and the use of explosive weapons in highly populated areas. The authorities that wielded influence over parties to conflicts had to ensure that those who preached international law while failing to respect it were held to account. Secure humanitarian access to those in need must be provided and the safety of humanitarian workers must be ensured. One year after the World Humanitarian Summit, it was disappointing to see that humanitarian needs continued to grow, with global forced displacement exceeding even the shocking levels that had been reached the previous year. Although there had been some success in increasing the efficiency with which aid was delivered, it was clear that little progress was being made on the key issue of reducing need. The gap between the number of people requiring aid and the resources available would continue to grow unless progress was made in the area of conflict resolution.

53. **The observer for Canada** said that forced displacement and unmet humanitarian needs continued to grow. As a result, an estimated $23 billion would be needed to provide adequate support to around 140 million people in need around the world. Canada was determined to come to the aid of those affected by humanitarian crises.

54. The World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain had highlighted the need for all stakeholders to work differently to meet and reduce humanitarian needs in the long term. Canada was strongly committed to promoting and carrying out humanitarian reforms. To that end, it had taken steps to provide more reliable and flexible humanitarian financing, to increase support for local response actors and to promote gender-responsive humanitarian action. The feminist international assistance policy, which had recently been launched by the Government of Canada, directly incorporated many of the commitments set out in the context of the World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain. In recognition of the fact that women and girls were disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises, Canada intended to strengthen sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response strategies in humanitarian settings. In addition, it would play a greater leadership role, including through the call to action on protection from gender-based violence in emergencies, promote respect for humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law, advocate for humanitarian funding to address women and girls' sexual and reproductive health needs during humanitarian responses and strengthen the capacity of local and national women's groups, which played a critical role in responding quickly to emergencies.

55. The current famine in South Sudan and the severe food shortages in north-eastern Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen were the latest crises to result from the failure of actors to respect their obligations in times of armed conflict. Humanitarian access must be allowed to reach those in need and the safety and security of humanitarian workers must be ensured.

56. **The observer for the Syrian Arab Republic** said that the guiding principles outlined in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182 were more important now than ever before. If the principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence and humanity, as well as coordination and cooperation with the governments of the States concerned, were properly observed, without any kind of selectivity or politicization — which had afflicted the work of the United Nations in a number of emergency situations — they provided the basis for the successful delivery of aid.

57. The Secretary-General's report on the same topic discussed the provision of international humanitarian aid in detail but failed to address the root causes of crises, which included terrorism. The report also failed to mention the unilateral coercive measures that prolonged crises and created environments conducive to displacement and migration. The United Nations should stand ready to deal objectively, transparently and independently with the challenges concerned and to address the root causes behind humanitarian crises by

further developing and implementing the 2030 Agenda rather than focusing only on the short-term consequences of such crises.

58. The United Nations should adopt new measures to ensure that affected persons were given support and could participate in sustainable development. Such measures should be the responsibility of governments and local stakeholders should not be held responsible for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

59. The Syrian Arab Republic agreed that preventing crises would be less costly and more efficacious than responding to them. The approach taken by the United Nations to current crises should not have the effect of prolonging and escalating them. In that regard, the Syrian Arab Republic noted the attempt to expand the mandate of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in a way that would enable it to encroach on issues that fell within the jurisdiction of States, which were responsible for protecting and ensuring the safety of their people.

60. Although the Secretary-General's report stressed that the protection of persons should be at the centre of humanitarian actions, it ignored situations such as the one in Yemen, which faced the worst humanitarian crisis in modern history. Likewise, the Council's resolutions emphasized the need to provide humanitarian assistance to civilians in occupied territories but failed to mention the persons living in Arab lands that had been occupied by Israel since 1967. The commitments, initiatives and recommendations relating to the World Humanitarian Summit that were mentioned in the report were not mandatory and did not reflect a consensus between States as they did not emanate from a negotiated process within institutions.

61. In spite of the staggering challenges that it faced, the Syrian Arab Republic continued to provide basic services to its people and humanitarian assistance to those in need in cooperation with international humanitarian bodies. The Syrian Arab Republic wished to reiterate its concerns about the sources of information used by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the accuracy of the data on humanitarian assistance used for the report, including the data on the needs of the population in Aleppo.

62. **The observer for Norway** said that the scale and complexity of today's humanitarian crises were unprecedented. Norway supported the Secretary-General's efforts to reform the United Nations, strengthen international cooperation and promote partnerships that would deliver more sustainable solutions to the millions of people affected by humanitarian crises. In view of the fact that humanitarian appeals were chronically underfunded, Norway had increased its humanitarian budget by over 50 per cent over the previous four years. Norway was deeply concerned by the devastating levels of food insecurity in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and the Lake Chad region and had committed over $100 million to initiatives aimed at easing those crises. In addition, Norway was one of the largest contributors to the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund, which played a critical role in responding to famine. As the Fund was currently facing an acute funding crisis, Norway called on all stakeholders to support its life-saving actions.

63. The parties to conflicts must provide humanitarian relief teams with rapid and unimpeded access to persons in need and the international community must universally condemn and take action against those who attacked health-care services. The Health Care in Danger initiative, which was managed by the International Committee of the Red Cross, should be universally supported. Norway was committed to the Secretary-General's recommendations on implementing Security Council resolution 2286 (2016) and called on all States members to make the same commitment.

64. Steps must be taken to protect children from armed conflict. In that regard, Norway urged all states to support the Safe School Declaration. In addition, efforts should be made to ensure that the protection of women and children's safety and human rights were an integral part of humanitarian responses. It was necessary to promote the participation of women and women's organizations and step up efforts to combat sexual abuse and gender-based violence.

65. The Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing presented an opportunity to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance and place people at the centre of humanitarian

responses. Norway had already adopted many of the initiatives set out in the Grand Bargain, such as flexible funding and multi-year commitments, enabling more predictable, adaptive and cost-effective humanitarian responses. Norway was committed to increasing the use of cash in humanitarian assistance and would work with its partners to ensure better coordination.

66. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development could not be achieved without stepping up efforts to assist the vulnerable persons left behind. To that end, it was critical to establish stronger partnerships between host communities, the United Nations system, multilateral development banks and civil society. The New Way of Working initiative, established at the World Humanitarian Summit, brought greater coherence to United Nations humanitarian and development interventions while respecting humanitarian principles. The comprehensive refugee response framework was a prime example of an initiative that sought to implement those principles. The refugee solidarity summit in Kampala had been an important stepping stone towards further strengthening those principles and had paved the way for a robust global compact on refugees in 2018. The Education Cannot Wait fund was a further example of a concrete initiative that promoted greater coherence across humanitarian and development interventions and fostered new public-private partnerships.

67. Working differently also meant reinforcing local and national capacities to respond to humanitarian crises. Norway supported capacity-building of local and national actors through many different instruments and funding channels in both the humanitarian and the development fields.

68. **The observer for Sweden** said that for decades, Sweden had been a major humanitarian donor and a driving force behind the reform of the international humanitarian system. In working to honour the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit, States should bear in mind that humanitarian action was not a substitute for addressing the root causes of conflicts or for brokering political solutions to bring them to an end. Sweden strongly supported the United Nations sustaining peace agenda and was currently focusing its efforts on preventing man-made and natural disasters.

69. In its capacity as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Sweden advocated the strengthening of principled humanitarian action and underscored the need for increased humanitarian access during conflict and for greater protection of civilians in conflict areas. Moreover, Sweden closely monitored the implementation of the United Nations reform agenda to ensure the preservation of the structures responsible for delivering humanitarian assistance in accordance with the core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

70. Currently, an estimated 20 million people in Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen were in need of humanitarian assistance. To date, Sweden had allocated $98 million in an effort to meet such unprecedented humanitarian needs. Global food insecurity, the prevalence of malnutrition, new outbreaks of cholera and the widespread protection crisis made it all the more important for States to deliver without delay on the pledges that they had made at the recent conferences on humanitarian funding. In such testing times, there was a need for States to show greater flexibility in allocating funding for humanitarian action. Sweden was firmly convinced of the benefits associated with flexible, non-earmarked funding and of the need to create stronger incentives to encourage States to adopt that approach. Sweden continued to provide substantial and predictable funding to the Central Emergency Response Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and to contribute to country-based humanitarian pooled funding. However, it remained deeply concerned at the severe underfunding of the Central Emergency Response Fund and urged States to act in order to remedy that situation.

71. Sweden strongly supported the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance and had actively promoted the introduction of a gender marker in an effort to forestall gender blindness in humanitarian operations. Going forward, Sweden would continue to prioritize the allocation of funding to humanitarian programmes that operated in accordance with the United Nations gender marker system.

72. Given the scarcity of financial resources, States should strive to improve the efficiency and transparency with which humanitarian assistance was delivered and the effectiveness of humanitarian action on the ground by applying the principles laid down in the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing.

73. **The representative of Estonia**, welcoming the Secretary-General's report, said that the need for effective and principled humanitarian action was greater than ever. Estonia was gravely concerned at the growing trend of conflict-induced displacement and the numerous related humanitarian challenges in Iraq, Nigeria, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, not to mention the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. In view of the shrinking humanitarian space in conflict areas, States and humanitarian organizations had a duty to strongly, consistently and systematically condemn violations of international humanitarian law and impunity for the perpetrators of those violations. Estonia remained committed to responding to the humanitarian needs arising from complex emergencies and natural disasters. Following the World Humanitarian Summit, it had stepped up its efforts to denounce violations of international humanitarian law, to address and reduce forced displacement, to overcome humanitarian development divides, to protect vulnerable groups, to provide access to education and to empower and protect women and girls. Estonia had also made considerable progress in allocating more non-earmarked and partially earmarked funding for humanitarian action and was exploring the possibility of increasing multi-year funding and its support to local responders.

74. Emerging humanitarian challenges could well necessitate working with partners from outside the humanitarian sector. However, humanitarian action should remain strictly humanitarian in nature and the core humanitarian values of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence should not be compromised under any circumstances. The importance of strengthening humanitarian action notwithstanding, if there was insufficient political commitment to address the root causes of man-made humanitarian crises, durable solutions would remain out of reach.

75. **The representative of Spain** said that Spain aligned itself with the statement delivered by Malta on behalf of the European Union. Spain continued to view the protection of civilians in conflict areas and respect for international humanitarian law as priorities in the humanitarian sphere. In that connection, the country wished to highlight the importance of securing rapid and unrestricted humanitarian access to conflict areas and the urgent need to find political solutions to ongoing humanitarian crises. Indeed, the international humanitarian community should avoid focusing solely on those humanitarian crises receiving extensive media coverage to the detriment of protracted and forgotten crises. The solution to such crises ought to be political and not humanitarian, as pressing food and protection needs could only be met through respect for international humanitarian law and through dialogue and peace. States had a duty to honour the commitments set out in the Grand Bargain and to continue to raise awareness of humanitarian concerns to ensure that they were given greater prominence in the global political agenda. The international humanitarian community should continue to build on the gains made in promoting dialogue and trust between humanitarian actors and local populations and authorities, and in providing basic services in conflict areas.

76. Although the draft resolution on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (E/2017/L.24) covered a number of pertinent issues, such as the relationship between conflict and natural disasters and humanitarian crises and the need to prevent impunity for persons perpetrating attacks against humanitarian and medical personnel, Spain harboured some doubts over whether it effectively addressed the specific issues encountered in the field. The inclusion in the draft resolution of operative measures that responded to the specific needs generated by humanitarian crises would set it apart from similar initiatives and minimize any overlap between them.

77. No further progress could be made in reducing food insecurity and forced displacement, improving the protection afforded to humanitarian and medical personnel and providing services that catered to the specific needs of women in humanitarian crisis situations unless there was adequate humanitarian access and respect for international humanitarian law. Going forward, the international humanitarian community should direct

its efforts towards giving effect to all resolutions relating to humanitarian action and assistance and to meeting the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit. It would be helpful if the United Nations, States and humanitarian actors reported on the measures that they had taken in that connection at some point in the future.

78. **The observer for Belarus** said that the increasing scale and complexity of humanitarian crises necessitated closer cooperation among the international community and a suitably adapted system for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was to be commended on its fundraising efforts for humanitarian activities and on the funding milestone that it had reached through coordinated, inter-agency emergency appeals.

79. Going forward, the United Nations should focus its efforts on preventing situations that had the potential to descend into humanitarian crises. Given that increased prosperity and greater well-being on the ground were likely to reduce the probability of such crises arising, it was important to ensure the availability of sustainable and predictable funding for United Nations development-oriented activities. The United Nations should also do more to promote capacity-building and peacekeeping activities as a means of preventing conflict and devise a more coordinated approach to combating international terrorism.

80. The increasing prevalence of natural disasters linked to climate change only underscored the need to fulfil the Paris Agreement and to increase the preparedness of States. The international community's capacity to predict and respond to such disasters could be enhanced through closer cooperation between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Meteorological Organization, particularly in data-sharing.

81. The effectiveness of humanitarian assistance was contingent upon its intended recipients having unimpeded access to it. It appeared that international and non-governmental organizations, which played an important role in guaranteeing such access, were experiencing what could only be described as a crisis of confidence. It might be useful for such organizations to refer to the working methods of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for guidance.

82. Over the period from 2016 to 2017, Belarus had allocated more than $1 million to humanitarian assistance projects in several countries. The country would pursue its peacekeeping and intermediary efforts in the region.

83. **The representative of the Republic of Korea** said that his Government found it reprehensible that, in 2017, some 20 million people were facing or were at risk of facing famine, a phenomenon which ought to have been eradicated years previously. The efforts undertaken and the commitments made by the international community in the humanitarian sphere to date were clearly inadequate. The current level of humanitarian funding was not sufficient to mitigate the unprecedented humanitarian needs generated by myriad crises and natural disasters. The international community should focus its efforts on preventing and ending conflicts, reducing vulnerability to natural disasters and addressing the root causes of fragility, which included poverty, injustice and flawed post-conflict reconstruction. It was clear that humanitarian actors would not be able to accomplish that task alone and that there was a need for the international humanitarian community to forge new partnerships with political, development and peacebuilding actors. Moreover, it was imperative that the ongoing reform should enhance the ability of the United Nations development system and peacebuilding architecture to deliver as one, going forward.

84. In order to ensure the availability of additional funding for humanitarian action, donors and recipients of humanitarian assistance should consider increasing their contributions and broadening their donor base, respectively. In the space of one year, the Republic of Korea had increased its humanitarian budget by 88 per cent and continued to reach out to potential donors. The country had also honoured its commitment to double its contribution to country-based humanitarian pooled funding and had increased multi-year funding to humanitarian actors. Donors could contribute to a more effective and efficient humanitarian response by providing flexible and predictable non-earmarked funding, while humanitarian agencies could do so by undertaking joint assessments, improving data quality and adopting more innovative measures, such as cash-based assistance.

85. The difficulties experienced by humanitarian actors in accessing conflict areas to deliver assistance were a major cause for concern. All States had an obligation to allow and facilitate unimpeded humanitarian access during conflict and to introduce clear, simple and expedited procedures for the entry of humanitarian personnel and the deployment of goods. The protection of vulnerable groups should remain at the centre of all humanitarian action and special attention should be paid to their needs, particularly during emergencies and protracted crises. Every State had a part to play in addressing the enormous humanitarian challenges facing the international community and in ending human suffering.

86. **The representative of the United Kingdom** said that the unprecedented number of protracted humanitarian crises were overwhelmingly man-made, driven by conflict, broken political systems and instability and exacerbated by environmental factors and a lack of respect for international humanitarian law. In Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, drought and conflict were pushing families to the brink of starvation, while the six-year conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic showed no sign of abating. In responding to those humanitarian crises, the international community should afford vulnerable groups greater protection and intensify efforts to eradicate the scourges of modern-day slavery, organized crime and human trafficking. The current international humanitarian system was unable to cope with the humanitarian needs arising from such complex crises and needed to undergo radical reform. It was no longer sufficient to act when a humanitarian crisis was already unfolding. The international community needed a humanitarian system that, in addition to providing immediate assistance to States, built their resilience so that they were better prepared to deal with a humanitarian crisis, thereby reducing the risk of the crisis becoming protracted.

87. The United Kingdom remained one of the world's largest humanitarian donors, providing substantial multi-year and non-earmarked funding. The Government had just confirmed that further financial resources had been allocated to help alleviate the food crisis in Ethiopia and Somalia. The United Kingdom would shortly publish its new humanitarian reform policy, in which it pledged to continue to respect international humanitarian law and the core humanitarian principles while protecting the most vulnerable; to continue to invest in teams of experts who could respond immediately to natural disasters; to help other countries prepare for humanitarian crises, build up resilience and resolve conflicts; to combine humanitarian and development funding to support education, jobs and social protection in protracted crisis situations; to advocate the reform of the existing international humanitarian system; and to promote partnerships with the private sector when appropriate, as well as greater recourse to cash-based assistance.

88. The United Kingdom would do its utmost to ensure that the comprehensive refugee response framework and the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration yielded positive results and succeeded in affording refugees and migrants adequate protection and access to basic services. The international humanitarian community had a duty to ensure that persons affected by humanitarian crises were at the centre of humanitarian action. The United Kingdom had undertaken to honour the commitments set out in the Grand Bargain and urged other States to do likewise. It would continue to use its resources to address the root causes of and to seek political solutions to humanitarian crises.

89. **The observer for Switzerland** said that the international humanitarian community often faced serious difficulties in operating in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, which were a precondition for the recognition and acceptance of humanitarian actors by the parties to a conflict and often a decisive factor in their gaining unimpeded humanitarian access. Switzerland was deeply concerned at the shrinking humanitarian space in conflict areas and recalled the need for humanitarian personnel to have access to the affected population and for the affected population, in turn, to have access to basic services and protection.

90. It was regrettable that the universal ratification of Protocols I and II Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 had still not been achieved. Switzerland invited States that had not yet ratified the instruments to do so without delay and encouraged States that were already parties to them to continue to promote their universal ratification. In addition, States must implement Security Council resolution 2286 (2016) on the protection of civilians in

armed conflict and give full effect to the recommendations formulated by the Secretary-General on that subject.

91. Past experience with bilateral cooperation programmes showed that a multidimensional and multisectoral approach was necessary to provide an effective response to conflicts, situations of violence and natural disasters and to preserve development gains. As the food crisis in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen had shown, it was not possible to reduce poverty if the action taken to that end did not include a risk-reduction component. In order to address the multiple obstacles to humanitarian action, United Nations actors should undertake a joint analysis of the contexts, risks and needs involved and use that information to devise a holistic approach that included the promotion of peace, humanitarian action and development.

92. **The observer for Ukraine** said that the humanitarian affairs segment of the Council's 2017 session was taking place against a backdrop of serious challenges to human dignity, security and humanity as a result of Russian aggression against Ukraine. The Russian Federation continued to ignore all calls for it to facilitate direct and unimpeded humanitarian access to occupied Ukrainian territories, fuelling conflict in certain areas where Russian forces relentlessly shelled residential areas and critical civilian infrastructure. The conflict continued to claim lives and to cause widespread damage. It had also displaced some 1.6 million persons, generating additional humanitarian needs. According to the latest information supplied by a number of international organizations, the impact of Russian aggression against Ukraine had been felt far beyond occupied Ukrainian territories and had left many people struggling to cope with the insecurity, destruction, trauma and disruption to basic services and employment that it had caused. The people living in occupied Ukrainian territories were in need of protection and access to food, water, health and education.

93. The Government of Ukraine was doing its best to deal with such immense challenges in keeping with its responsibility as primary duty bearer to protect the Ukrainian people and to find durable solutions in close cooperation with its international partners. Despite the ongoing hostilities and constantly growing humanitarian needs, response activities continued to be severely underfunded. Many humanitarian partners had already exhausted their resources and had been forced to suspend their activities. Ukraine was facing one of its greatest challenges since having gained independence and continued to count on the support of the international community to help alleviate the hardship endured by millions of Ukrainians and restore critical infrastructure in the country. Ukraine once again urged the Russian Federation to halt its aggression, including all attacks by Russian forces; to reverse the unlawful annexation of Crimea; to put an end to all violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in occupied Ukrainian territories; and to assume its responsibilities as a party to the conflict and to honour its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.